United Nations

Press Release

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General's Executive Delegate appeals for $415 million in emergency assistance for Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Kuwait; calls on international community to give United Nations wherewithal needed to carry out task it has been asked to undertake.

- Iraq protests against statement by British Prime Minister.

- Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship says $10 million has been pledged so far in response to appeal for $14.4 million for emergency relief to Liberia.

- Eradication of poverty and cooperation as means to improve situation of vulnerable groups cited in committee debate on world social situation and social development.

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The Secretary-General's Executive Delegate for humanitarian affairs in the Gulf, Sadruddin Aga Khan, today launched a red alert -- an appeal for $415 million in emergency assistance for Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Kuwait.

A United Nations press officer in Geneva reported that Sadruddin Aga Khan, speaking at a meeting in Geneva of donors and international humanitarian agencies, said the needs of Iraq were the most crucial. Refugees, including the Kurds, he said, would not go back unless there was something to go back to.

He stressed that the United Nations could not "deliver in this situation" if the Organization was not strengthened. He called on the international community to give the Organization the wherewithal that it required to enable it to carry out the task it had been asked to undertake.

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Iraq has protested against what it called an "appalling and arrogant" statement by British Prime Minister John Major that the United Kingdom would

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not allow Iraq to rejoin the international community as long as President Saddam Hussein was in power. In a letter to the President of the Security Council of 13 May, Iraqi Foreign Minister Ahmed Hussein said the British attitude revealed that plans to destroy Iraq had been drawn up before 2 August. The destruction of Iraq and changing the regime in power was one of the main objectives of everything which occurred, he said. It was not simply a question of re-establishing the status quo ante in Kuwait.

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Approximately $10 million has been pledged so far for emergency relief to Liberia in response to an appeal by the Secretary-General for $14.4 million in relief funds, according to James O.C. Jonah, Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship.

Addressing the Economic and Social Council this morning, Mr. Jonah said the civil conflict in Liberia had had a devastating impact on the economic and social infrastructure of the country. More than three quarters of a million people had fled, which also seriously affected the economic and social infrastructures in neighbouring host countries. Noting that the real solution to the crisis must be political, he appealed to the international community to respond in the meantime to the humanitarian appeal launched by the Secretary-General.

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Poverty is a cause and a consequence of most social development problems and its eradication should be of the highest priority among endeavours of the international community. That view was expressed by several speakers this morning in the Social Committee of the Economic and Social Council.

While emphasizing the importance of international cooperation in addressing the specific needs of the socially vulnerable, among them the young, the old and the disabled, speakers also voiced concern over the lack of adequate human and financial resources in the organs of the United Nations system which deal with social questions. Several of them regretted that the interim report of the Secretary-General on the world social situation had not fulfiled the guidelines set out by the Council.

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